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(54) **SUNROOF DEVICE**

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B60J 7/057 (2006.01)

B60J 7/043 (2006.01)

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CPC **B60J 7/0573** (2013.01); **B60J 7/043** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC B60J 7/057; B60J 7/043; B60J 7/0573

USPC 296/214, 216.01-224

See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Dennis H Pedder

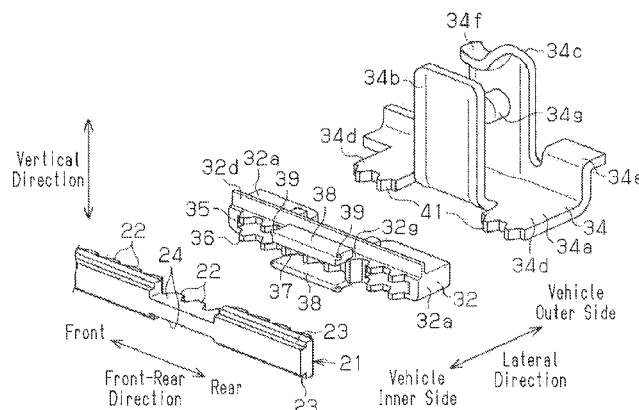
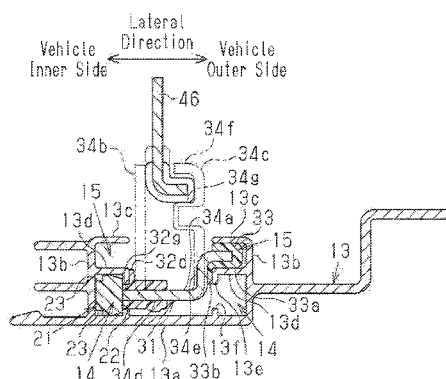
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A sunroof device comprising: a drive cable having driving teeth arranged in a longitudinal direction and being driven to move in the vehicle front-rear direction along a guiderail; and a sliding member that controls the posture of a functional bracket together with a movable panel, in conjunction with movement in the vehicle front-rear direction. The sunroof device also comprises: driven teeth formed on the sliding member, that are meshed with the driving teeth and restrict relative movement of the drive cable and the sliding member in the vehicle front-rear direction; and a mounted portion formed on the guiderail. The drive cable and the sliding member, in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth, are mounted on the mounted portion, and the mounted portion holds these in the vehicle lateral and vertical directions.

5 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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Fig. 1A

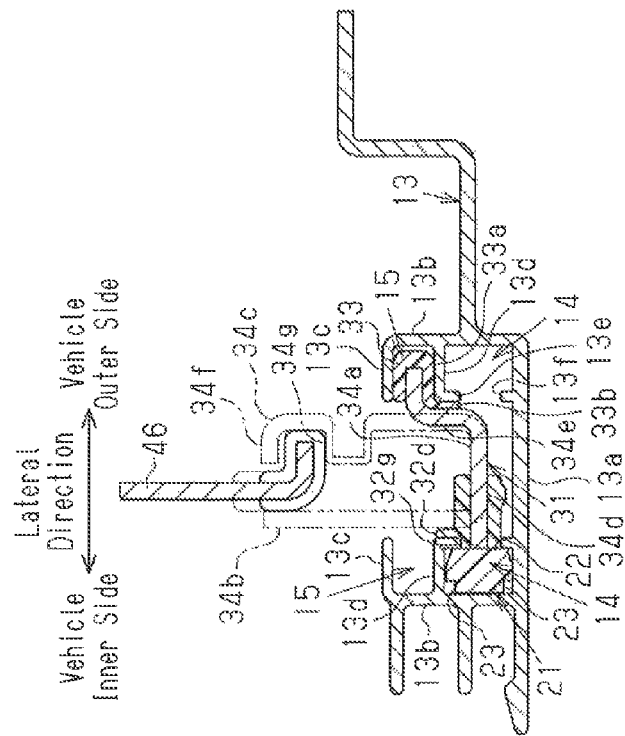
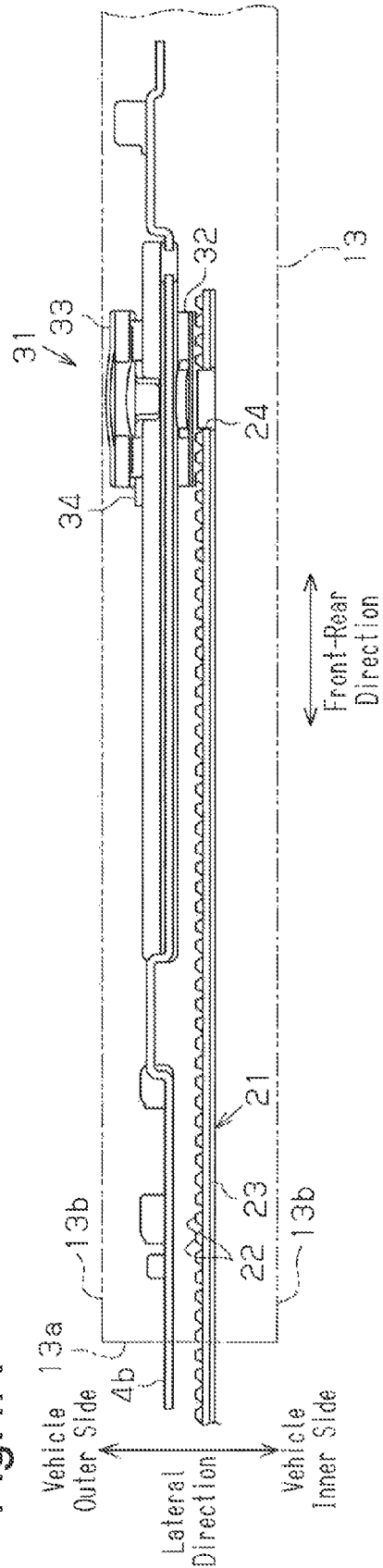


Fig.2A

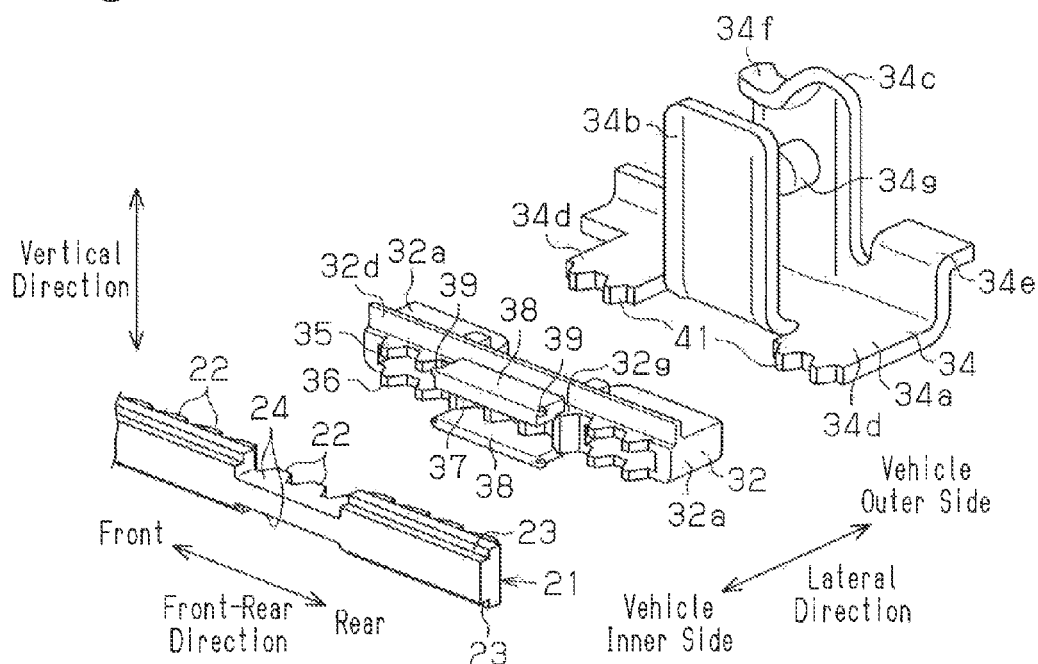


Fig.2B

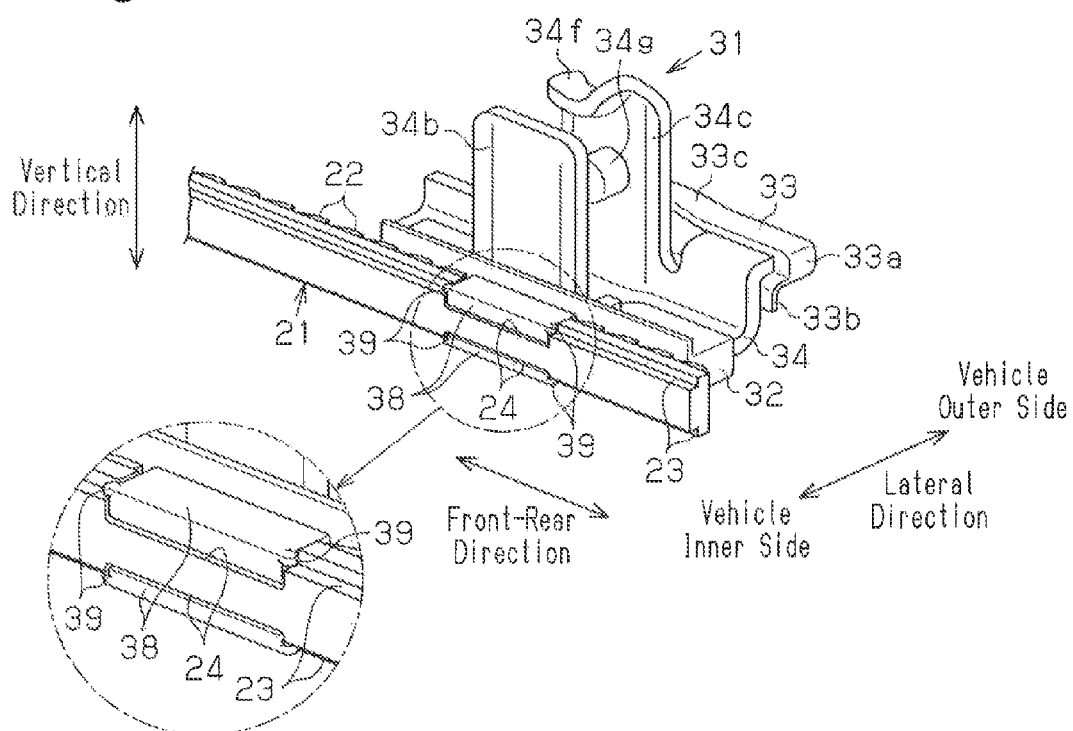


Fig.3

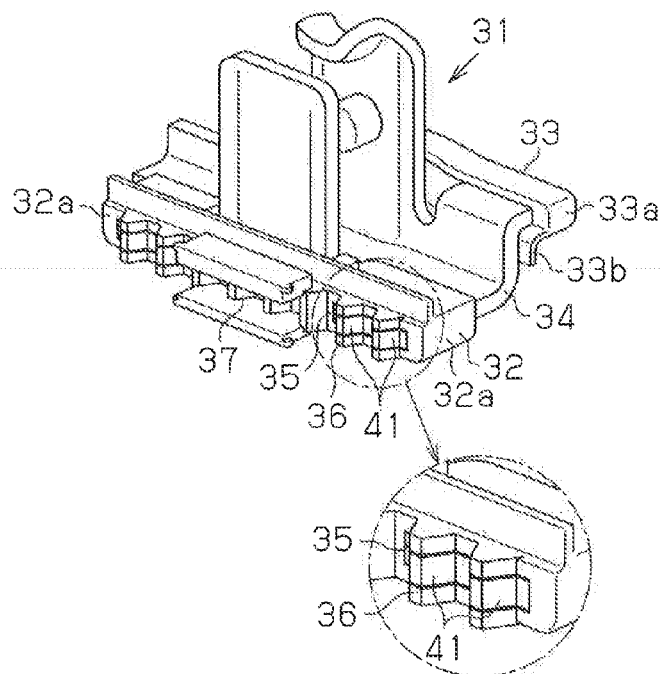


Fig.4A

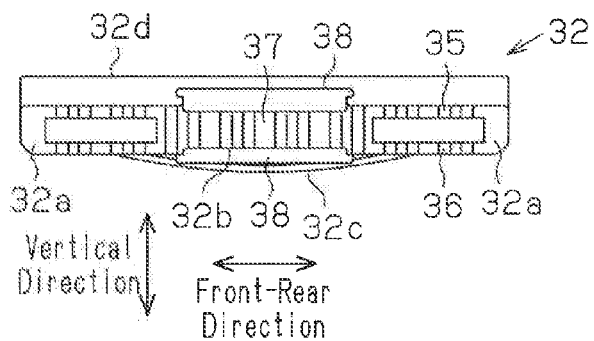


Fig.4C

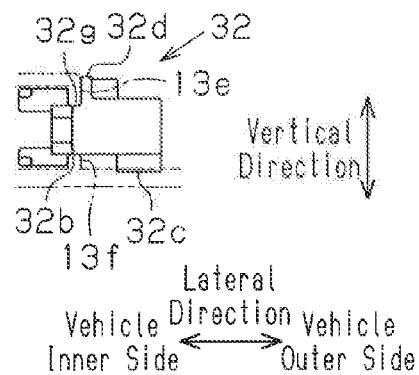


Fig.4B

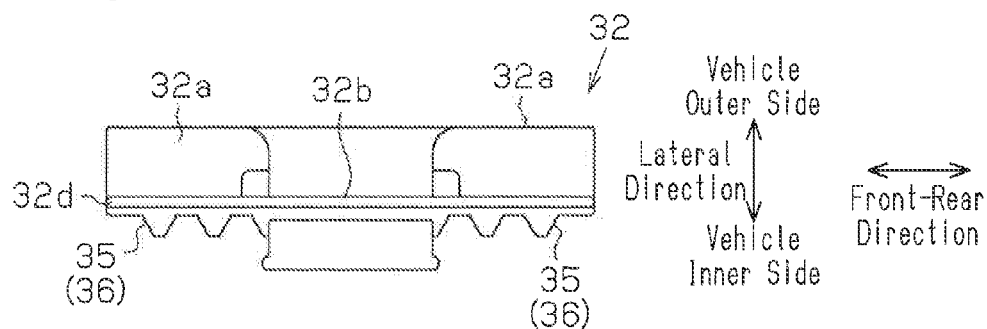


Fig.5

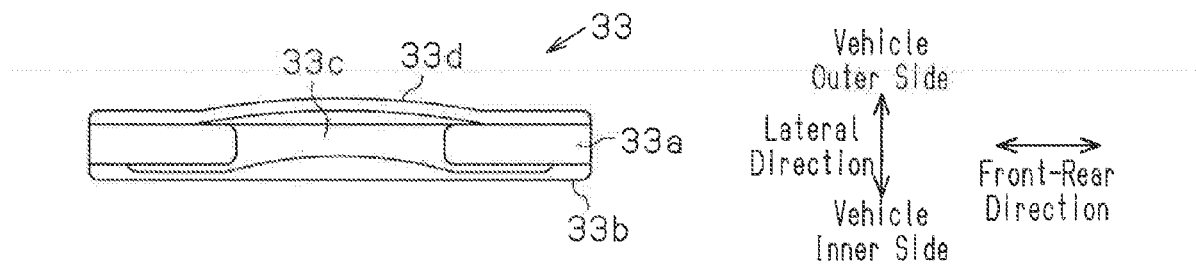
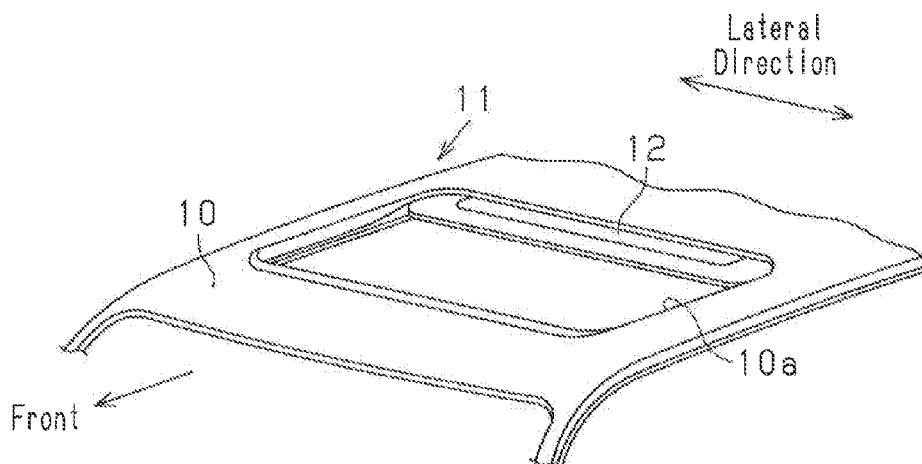


Fig.6



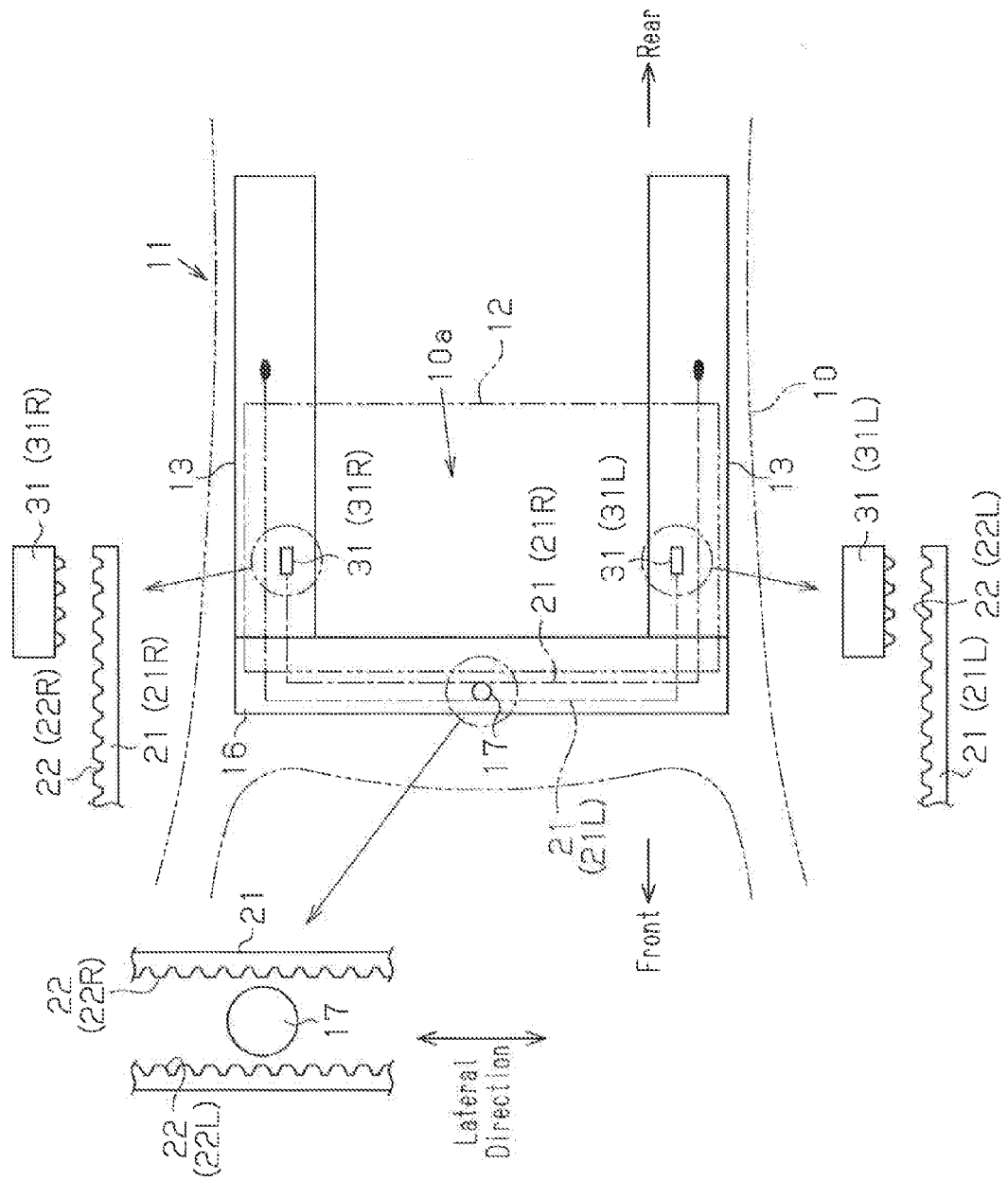
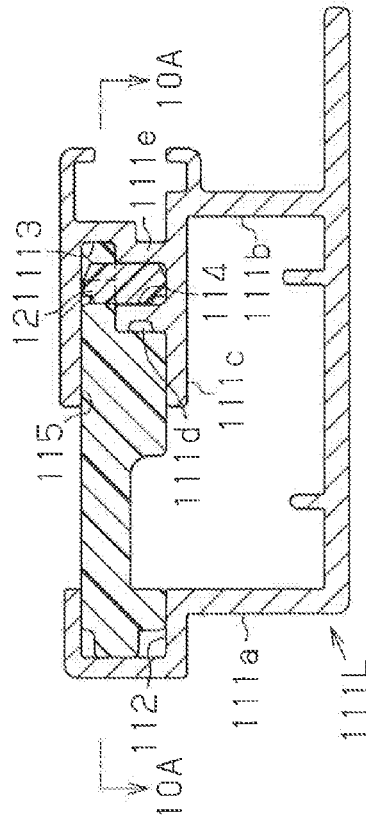


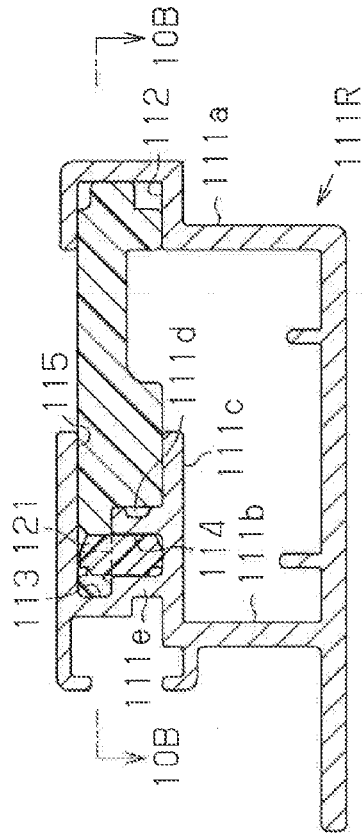
Fig. 7

Fig.8A



Vehicle
Outer Side
← Lateral Direction
→ Inner Side
Vehicle

Fig.8B



Vehicle
Inner Side
← Lateral Direction
→ Outer Side
Vehicle

7.6.9. A

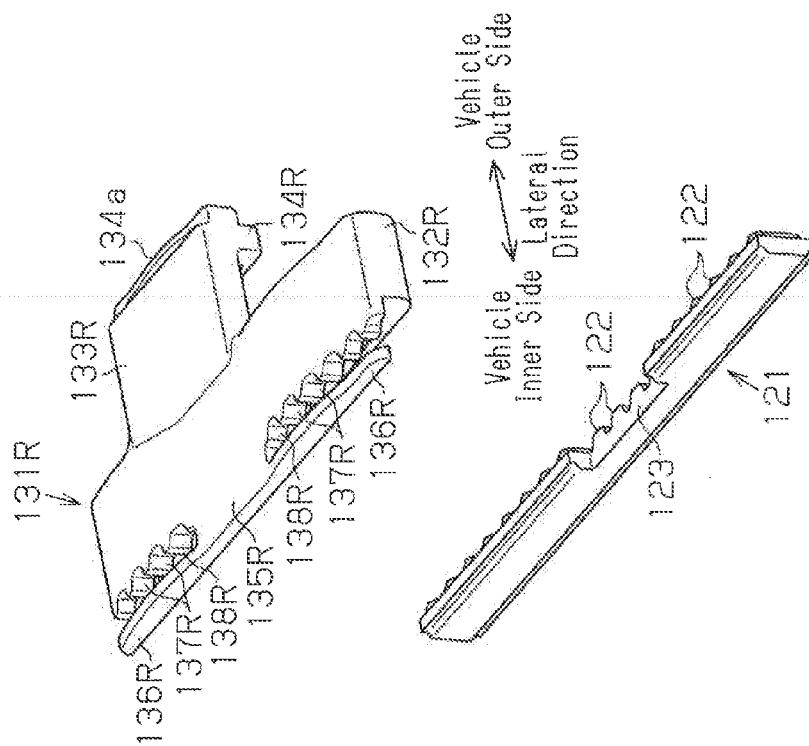
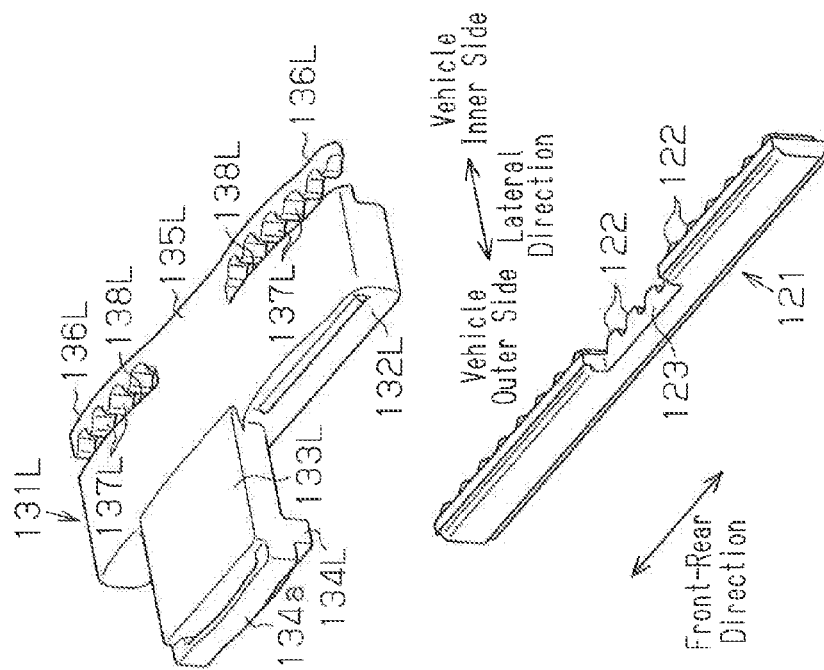


Fig. 10A

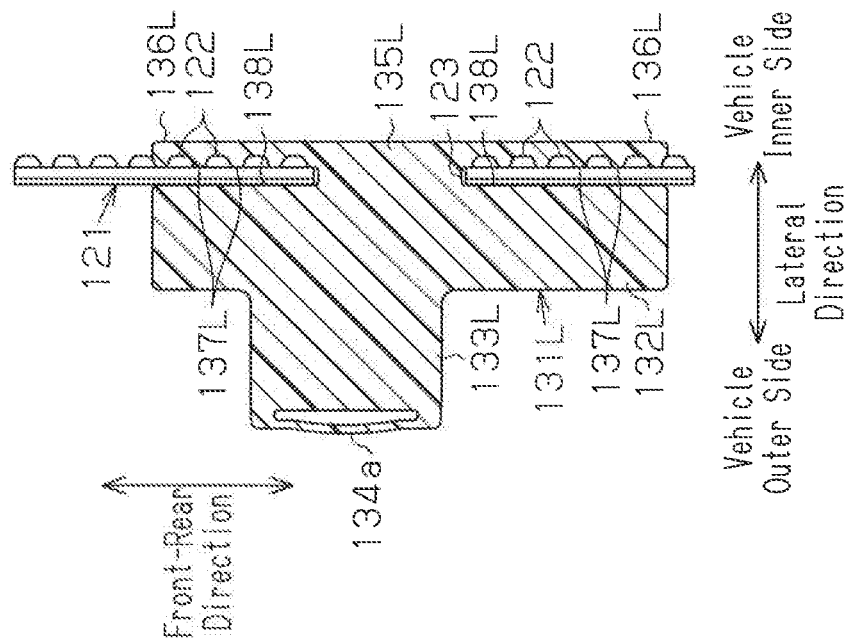


Fig. 10B

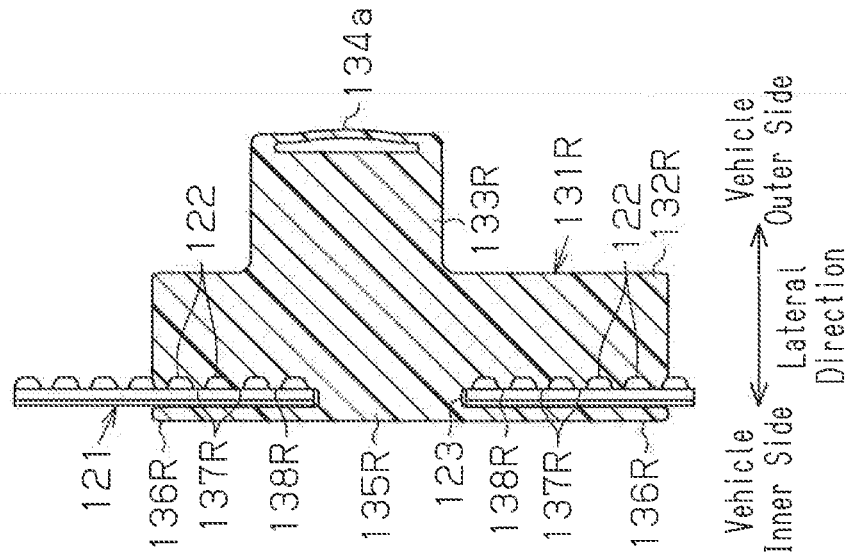
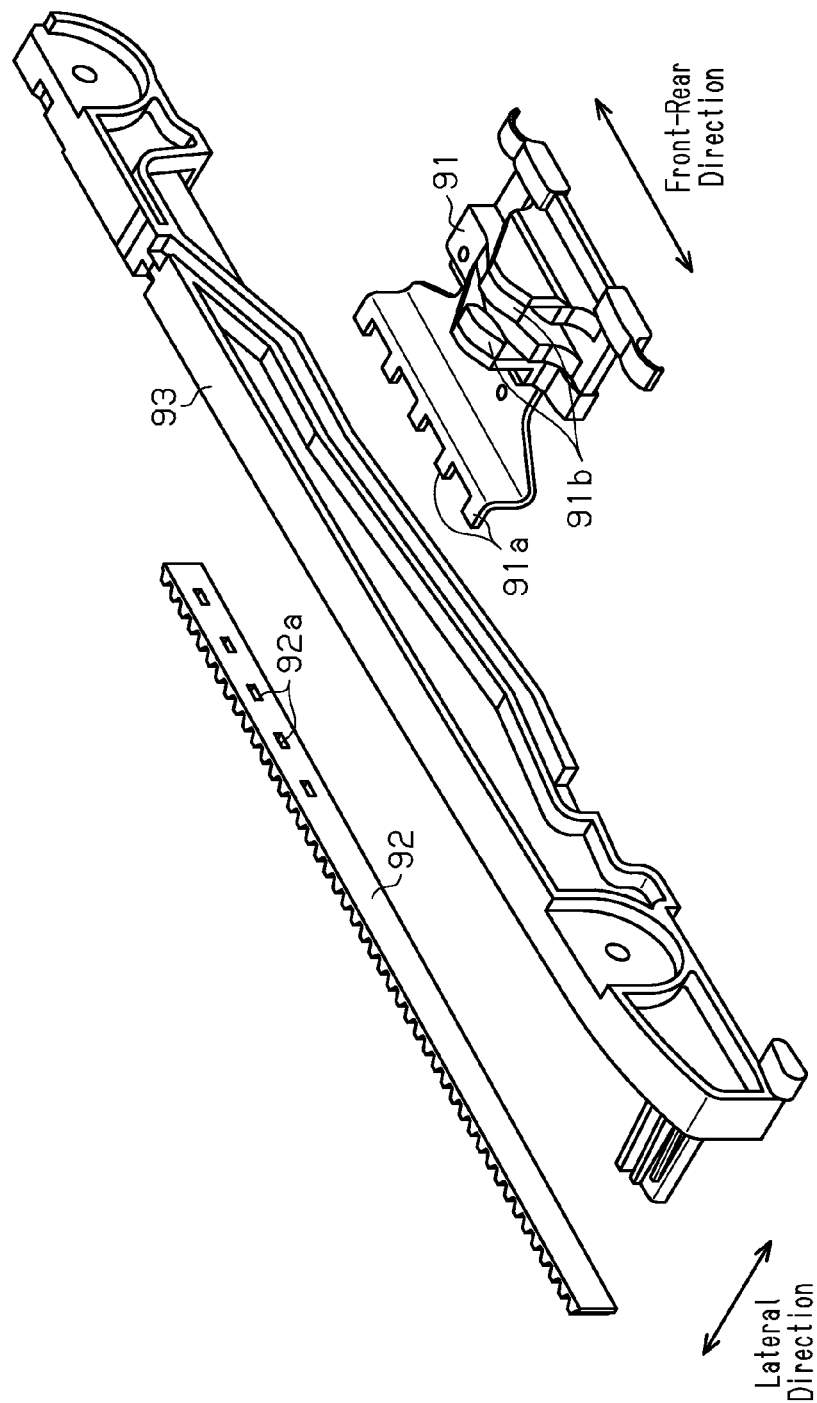


Fig. 11(Prior Art)



SUNROOF DEVICE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a sunroof device that opens and closes an opening formed in a roof of a vehicle with a movable panel.

BACKGROUND ART

In the prior art, for example, patent document 1 describes such a known sunroof device. As shown in FIG. 11, the sunroof device includes a sliding member **91** arranged in a movable manner in the front-rear direction of a vehicle along a guiderail, which is arranged in an opening formed in a roof of the vehicle along a lateral edge. The sliding member **91** includes a plurality (five) of engaging claws **91a** arranged in the front-rear direction of the vehicle and a support portion **91b** projecting in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

Each engaging claw **91a** of the sliding member **91** is fitted to a corresponding one of a plurality (five) of engaging holes **92a** formed in a straight teeth rack belt **92**, which serves as a drive cable driven to move in the front-rear direction of the vehicle along the guiderail. Thus, movement of the straight teeth rack belt **92** in the front-rear direction of the vehicle integrally moves the sliding member **91** in the front-rear direction.

The support portion **91b** of the sliding member **91** is coupled to a functional bracket **93** fixed to a lateral edge of a movable panel. As the sliding member **91** moves in the front-rear direction of the vehicle, the position of the functional bracket **93** is controlled together with the position of the movable panel to open and close the opening.

PRIOR ART DOCUMENT

Patent Document

Patent Document 1: Japanese Patent No. 3650327 (paragraph [0011] and FIG. 3)

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Problems that are to be Solved by the Invention

In patent document 1, the straight teeth rack belt **92** includes the engaging holes **92a**, which receive the engaging claws **91a** of the sliding member **91**. This lowers the strength of the straight teeth rack belt **92** and limits miniaturization when ensuring the strength.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a sunroof device that allows for further miniaturization of a drive cable, which is coupled to a sliding member used to control the position of a movable panel, without lowering the strength of the drive cable.

Means for Solving the Problem

To solve the above problem, a sunroof device includes a functional bracket, which is configured to support a lateral edge of a movable panel that opens and closes an opening formed in a roof portion of a vehicle, a guiderail, which is configured to be located at a lateral edge of the opening and extend in the front-rear direction of the vehicle, a drive cable, which includes driving teeth aligned in a longitudinal direction and is driven to move along the guiderail in the front-rear direction of the vehicle, a sliding member, which is linked to

the functional bracket and arranged to be movable in the front-rear direction of the vehicle along the guiderail and controls a position of the functional bracket together with the movable panel when moving in the front-rear direction of the vehicle, driven teeth, which are formed on the sliding member and meshed with the driving teeth and restrict relative movement of the drive cable and the sliding member in the front-rear direction of the vehicle, and a mounted portion, which is formed on the guiderail. The drive cable and the sliding member, in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth, are mounted on the mounted portion, and the mounted portion holds the drive cable and the sliding member in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle.

In this structure, the drive cables and the sliding members are held in the front-rear direction of the vehicle by meshing the driving teeth with the driven teeth. The drive cable and the sliding member, in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth, are mounted on the mounted portion and held in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle. In this manner, the sliding member may be moved in the front-rear direction of the vehicle integrally with the drive cable, which is driven to move in the front-rear direction of the vehicle. In this case, by using the driving teeth without basically forming a hole in the drive cable, the drive cable and the sliding member may be integrally moved in the front-rear direction of the vehicle. This reduces the drive cable in size without decreasing the strength of the drive cable.

Preferably, in the sunroof device, the drive cable includes teeth arranged at fixed intervals. The sunroof device includes a drive source, which is meshed with the teeth and drives the drive cable. The teeth and the driving teeth have the same shape.

This structure allows for the shape of the teeth that are meshed with the drive source to be used and eliminates the need for a new shape for the driving teeth in the drive cable.

Preferably, the sunroof device includes a positioning portion that is located in the drive cable and the sliding member and determines where the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth.

In this structure, the positioning portion meshes the driving teeth with the driven teeth. This meshes the driven teeth with the driving teeth at the desirable position in the front-rear direction of the vehicle.

Preferably, the sunroof device includes a holding portion that holds the drive cable and the sliding member in a temporarily coupled manner.

This structure allows the holding portion to easily hold the drive cable and the sliding member in a temporarily coupled manner and improves coupling features when mounted on the guiderail (mounted portion).

Preferably, the sunroof device includes a slot, which is formed in a heightwise edge of the drive cable and opens in the lateral direction of the vehicle, and a positioning protrusion, which protrudes from the sliding member in the lateral direction of the vehicle opposed to the slot. The positioning protrusion is fitted to the slot when the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth.

In this structure, the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth when the positioning protrusion is fitted to the slot. This meshes the driven teeth with the driving teeth at the desirable position in the front-rear direction of the vehicle.

Preferably, in the sunroof device, the positioning protrusion is loosely fitted to the slot. The sunroof device includes a step, which is formed on the heightwise edge of the drive cable where the step is formed along substantially the entire length in the longitudinal direction and decreases the height of the drive cable at a side separated from the sliding member,

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and two hook projections, which project toward the front and rear directions from a lateral, distal end of the positioning protrusion and are hooked to the step at both sides of the slot to sandwich the slot in the front-rear direction of the vehicle.

In this structure, for example, prior to the attachment to the guiderail (mounted portion), when the drive cable is temporarily coupled to the sliding member with the driving teeth meshing the driven teeth, the two hook projections are each hooked to the step when the positioning protrusions are loosely fitted to the slots. This allows the holding portion to easily hold the drive cable and the sliding member in a temporarily coupled manner and improves coupling features when mounted on the guiderail (mounted portion).

Preferably, in the sunroof device, the sliding member includes a resin shoe member, which includes shoe side teeth and is capable of sliding in the front-rear direction of the vehicle along the guiderail, and a metal plate member, which includes plate side teeth and is attached to the shoe member and linked to the functional bracket. The driven teeth are formed by cooperation of the shoe side teeth and the plate side teeth, which are overlapped in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

In this structure, the driven teeth include the metal plate side teeth and are meshed with the driving teeth. This ensures the support strength of the sliding member and the drive cable in the front-rear direction of the vehicle in a preferred manner.

Preferably, in the sunroof device, the shoe side teeth include a tabular fitted portion through which the plate side teeth extend.

This structure allows the shoe member, in which the plate side teeth extend through the fitted portion, to support the plate side teeth in a further ensured manner.

Preferably, in the sunroof device, the sliding member includes two extension portions, which extend toward the front and rear directions of the vehicle from a distal end of the positioning protrusion, the driven teeth are formed on one of the two extension portions and two opposing portions, which are portions of the sliding member opposed to the two extension portions in the lateral direction of the vehicle, and the other one of the two extension portions and the two opposing portions are configured to hold a rear surface of the drive cable in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth.

In this structure, in the drive cable, the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth. The rear surface of the drive cable is held by the two opposing portions or the two extension portions and temporarily coupled to the sliding member. This improves coupling features when the drive cable and the sliding member, in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth, are mounted on the guiderail (mounted portion).

Effects of the Invention

The present invention has an effect allowing for further miniaturization of the drive cable, which is coupled to the sliding member used to control the position of the movable panel, without lowering the strength of the drive cable.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1A and 1B are a plan view and a cross-sectional side view showing a first embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 2A and 2B are an exploded perspective view and a perspective view showing the embodiment.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view showing a sliding member and an enlarged view of the sliding member.

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FIGS. 4A to 4C are an elevated view taken from the inner side in the lateral direction of a vehicle showing a first shoe member, a plan view showing the first shoe member, and an elevated view taken from the rear side of the vehicle showing the first shoe member.

FIG. 5 is a plan view showing a second shoe member.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view showing a roof of the vehicle.

FIG. 7 is a schematic plan view showing the roof of the vehicle.

FIGS. 8A and 8B are cross-sectional side views showing a second embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 9A and 9B are exploded perspective views showing the embodiment.

FIGS. 10A and 10B are cross-sectional views taken along lines 10A-10A and 10A-10B.

FIG. 11 is an exploded perspective view showing a prior art example.

EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

First Embodiment

A first embodiment of a sunroof device will now be described. Hereinafter, the front-rear direction of a vehicle is referred to as "front-rear direction" and the upper side and the lower side in the vertical direction of the vehicle are respectively referred to as "upper side" and "lower side." Also, the inner side in the lateral direction of the vehicle directed toward the inner side of a passenger compartment is referred to as "vehicle inner side" and the outer side in the lateral direction of the vehicle directed toward the outer side of the passenger compartment is referred to as "vehicle outer side."

As shown in FIG. 6, a tetragonal roof opening 10a, which serves as an opening, is formed in a roof 10, which serves as a roof portion of a vehicle, such as an automobile. Also, a sunroof device 11 is arranged in the roof 10. The sunroof device 11 includes a tetragonal movable panel 12, which is formed by, for example, a glass plate, and moves in the front-rear direction to open and close the roof opening 10a.

The schematic structure of the sunroof device 11, which is used in opening and closing operations of the movable panel 12 and the like, will now be described.

As shown in FIG. 7, the sunroof device 11 includes two guiderails 13, which are respectively arranged on and fixed to two lateral edges of the roof opening 10a. Each guiderail 13 is formed from, for example, an extrusion of aluminum alloy, and extends in the front-rear direction with a constant cross-section in the longitudinal direction.

A sliding member 31 is guided and supported by each guiderail 13 and movable in the front-rear direction. The movable panel 12, which bridges the two sliding members 31 and two lateral edges of the movable panel 12, are linked to and supported by the two sliding members 31. Movement of the sliding members 31 along the guiderails 13 moves the movable panel 12 to open and close the roof opening 10a.

Further, the sunroof device 11 includes a front housing 16, which is formed from, for example, a resin material, extends in the lateral direction of the vehicle, and is coupled to a front end of each guiderail 13. A drive source 17 (for example, an electric motor including an output gear) is located at an intermediate position of the front housing 16 in the longitudinal direction. The drive source 17 is connected to the two sliding members 31 and drives the sliding members 31 through straight teeth rack belts 21, which serve as a pair of generally belt-shaped drive cables formed from, for example, a resin material. The drive source 17 drives and simultaneously moves the sliding members 31 in the front-rear direction.

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More specifically, one of the straight teeth rack belts **21** (hereinafter, also referred to as the straight teeth rack belt **21R**) that is connected to the right sliding member **31** (hereinafter, also referred to as the sliding member **31R**) is arranged along the front housing **16** at the rear of the drive source **17**.

An outer surface of the straight teeth rack belt **21R** (surface facing away from the center of the roof opening **10a**) includes a driving teeth **22R**, which serve as teeth forming ridges and valleys in the inner-outer direction of the vehicle and are arranged at predetermined intervals in the longitudinal direction. The straight teeth rack belt **21R** is meshed with the drive source **17** where the driving teeth **22R** are located at the rear of the drive source **17**. The driving teeth **22R** of the straight teeth rack belt **21R** are also meshed with the sliding member **31R**.

In the same manner, one of the straight teeth rack belts **21** (hereinafter, also referred to as the straight teeth rack belt **21L**) that is connected to the left sliding member **31** (hereinafter, also referred to as the sliding member **31L**) is arranged along the front housing **16** in front of the drive source **17**.

An inner surface of the straight teeth rack belt **21L** (surface facing toward the center of the roof opening **10a**) includes driving teeth **22L**, which serves as teeth forming ridges and valleys in the inner-outer direction of the vehicle and are arranged at predetermined intervals in the longitudinal direction. The straight teeth rack belt **21L** is meshed with the drive source **17** where the driving teeth **22L** are located in front of the drive source **17**. The driving teeth **22L** of the straight teeth rack belt **21L** is also meshed with the sliding member **31L**.

That is, the driving teeth **22** (**22R** and **22L**) that are respectively meshed with the sliding members **31** (**31R** and **31L**) have the same shape as the driving teeth **22** (**22R** and **22L**) that are each meshed with the drive source **17**. Therefore, the teeth meshed with the drive source **17** are identically shaped.

The structure of the sunroof device **11** involved in opening and closing operations of the movable panel **12** and the like will now be described.

As shown in FIGS. **1A** and **1B**, the guiderail **13** includes a generally elongated bottom wall **13a** extending in the front-rear direction (the direction orthogonal to the plane of FIG. **13**) and two upright walls **13b**, which extend upward from the bottom wall **13a** and are arranged parallel to each other in the lateral direction of the vehicle. Each guiderail **13** also includes two upper flanges **13c**, which project toward each other in the lateral direction of the vehicle from upper ends of the upright walls **13b**, and two intermediate flanges **13d**, which project toward each other in the lateral direction of the vehicle from intermediate positions of the upright walls **13b** in the vertical direction of the vehicle. A projection **13e** downwardly projects toward the bottom wall **13a** from a distal end of each intermediate flange **13d**, and a projection **13f** upwardly projects toward each projection **13e** from the bottom wall **13a**.

The guiderail **13** cooperates with the bottom wall **13a**, the upright walls **13b**, the intermediate flanges **13d**, and the projections **13e** and **13f** to form first rail portions **14**, which have generally C-shaped cross-sections and open in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The guiderail **13** cooperates with the upright walls **13b**, the upper flanges **13c**, and the intermediate flanges **13d** to form second rail portions **15**, which have generally U-shaped cross-sections and open in the lateral direction of the vehicle, above the first rail portions **14**.

The straight teeth rack belt **21** is coupled in a slidable manner in the front-rear direction to the inner first rail portion **14**. The straight teeth rack belt **21** is driven by the electric drive source **17** to move along the first rail portion **14**

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(guiderail **13**) in the front-rear direction. In this case, the adjacent upright wall **13b** and the projections **13e** and **13f** restrict displacement of the straight teeth rack belt **21** relative to the guiderail **13** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The bottom wall **13a** and the adjacent intermediate flange **13d** restrict displacement of the straight teeth rack belt **21** relative to the guiderail **13** in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

As shown in FIGS. **2A** and **2B**, substantially the entire length of the inner upper and lower edges of the straight teeth rack belt **21** are chamfered in a tetragonal manner in the longitudinal direction to form two steps **23**. Consequently, the two steps **23** result in the straight teeth rack belt **21** having a smaller height at the vehicle inner side than the vehicle outer side. Further, two slots **24**, each of which opens in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are formed in a rear end portion of the straight teeth rack belt **21** by cutting out upper and lower edges to form generally U-shaped grooves.

The sliding member **31** is coupled to the straight teeth rack belt **21** to be integrally movable with the straight teeth rack belt **21** in the front-rear direction. The sliding member **31** includes a first resin shoe member **32** and a second resin shoe member **33**, which form a shoe member, and a metal plate member **34**.

As shown in FIGS. **4A** to **4C**, the first shoe member **32** includes two fitted portions **32a**, which are tetragonal and tubular and are aligned with each other in the front-rear direction, and a generally flat plate-like connection portion **32b**, which connects the two fitted portions **32a** in the front-rear direction at the vehicle inner side. Shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, which form ridges and valleys in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are respectively formed on an upper wall and a lower wall of each fitted portion **32a**. In the same manner, driven teeth **37**, which include teeth forming ridges and valleys in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are formed on the connection portion **32b**. The shoe side teeth **35** and **36** and the driven teeth **37** are aligned in the front-rear direction in intervals that are the same as the driving teeth **22**. The shoe side teeth **35** and **36** and the driven teeth **37** are placed on and thereby meshed with the driving teeth **22** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The fitted portions **32a** open in the lateral direction of the vehicle.

Additionally, the first shoe member **32** includes a thin plate-like elastic piece **32c**, the two ends of which are respectively connected to the lower surfaces of the two fitted portions **32a**. The elastic piece **32c** is generally arcuate and downwardly bulged. Further, in the first shoe member **32**, a generally elongated restriction piece **32d** extends upward from the proximity of the bases of the two upper shoe side teeth **35** and the driven teeth **37**. The restriction piece **32d** extends along substantially the entire length of the first shoe member **32** in the front-rear direction.

Further, in the first shoe member **32**, two generally flange-like positioning protrusions **38** extend from upper and lower edges of the connection portion **32b** toward the vehicle inner side (in the lateral direction of the vehicle opposing the slots **24**). That is, in the range where the two positioning protrusions **38** are located, the driven teeth **37** are decreased in height. The length of each positioning protrusion **36** in the front-rear direction is set to be slightly shorter than the open width of the slots **24** of the straight teeth rack belt **21** in the front-rear direction. The distance between opposing surfaces of the two positioning protrusions **38** in the vertical direction of the vehicle is set to be slightly greater than the height of the straight teeth rack belt **21** where the slots **24** are located in the vertical direction of the vehicle. This allows the two positioning protrusions **38** to be loosely fitted to the two slots **24** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. As shown in FIG. **2A**, when the first shoe member **32** is placed on the straight teeth rack

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belt 21 in the lateral direction of the vehicle, the two positioning protrusions 38 are loosely fitted to the two slots 24. This positions the first shoe member 32 at a certain position relative to the straight teeth rack belt 21 in the front-rear direction when the shoe side teeth 35 and 36 and the driven teeth 37 are meshed with the driving teeth 22. That is, the two positioning protrusions 38 are loosely fitted to the two slots 24 when the shoe side teeth 35 and 36 and the driven teeth 37 are meshed with the driving teeth 22.

As shown in the enlarged view of FIG. 2B, the distal portions of each positioning protrusion 38 includes two hook projections 39 extending from the upper ends in front and rear directions. When the positioning protrusions 38 are loosely fitted to the slots 24, the slots 24 press and squeeze the hook projections 39, which are elastically deformed. Then, when reaching the steps 23 formed at the vehicle inner side of the straight teeth rack belt 21 (the side facing away from the sliding member 31 in the lateral direction of the vehicle), the hook projections 39 are elastically restored and hooked to the steps 23. Thus, when the shoe side teeth 35 and 36 and the driven teeth 37 are meshed with the driving teeth 22, the first shoe member 32 may be temporarily supported by the straight teeth rack belt 21 with the two hook projections 39 of each positioning protrusion 38, which are hooked to the step 23 sandwiching the slot 24 at both sides in the front-rear direction.

As shown in FIG. 2A, the restriction piece 32d and the positioning protrusion 38 sandwich the upper surface of the connection portion 32b and project upward to form a rail guide portion 32g, which is a generally U-shaped groove and communicates the front and rear directions, in the first shoe member 32.

As shown in FIG. 2B, the second shoe member 33 includes a main body 33a, which has a tetragonal block-like shape with substantially the same length in the front-rear direction as the first shoe member 32, and a generally elongated restriction piece 33b, which extends downward from a lower inner edge of the main body 33a. The restriction piece 33b extends along substantially the entire length of the second shoe member 33 in the front-rear direction. The second shoe member 33 also includes a thin plate-like elastic piece 33c, the two ends of which are connected to an upper surface of the main body 33a at an intermediate position in the front-rear direction. The elastic piece 33c is generally arcuate, bulged upward, and separated from the main body 33a in the upper direction. Further, as shown in FIG. 5, the second shoe member 33 includes a thin plate-like elastic piece 33d, the two ends of which are connected to an outer surface of an intermediate portion of the main body 33a. The elastic piece 33d is generally arcuate, bulged toward the vehicle outer side, and separated from the main body 33a toward the vehicle outer side.

As shown in FIG. 2A, the plate member 34 includes a generally elongated main body 34a, which extends in the front-rear direction, and two upright wails 34b and 34c, which extend upward respectively from the vehicle inner side edge and the vehicle outer edge of the main body 34a at an intermediate portion in the longitudinal direction. The plate member 34 also includes two fitting pieces 34d, which extend toward the vehicle inner side respectively from front and rear ends of the main body 34a sandwiching the inner upright wall 34b.

Plate side teeth 41, which include a plurality of driven teeth forming ridges and valleys in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are formed on a distal end of each fitting piece 34d. The inner upright wail 34b is fitted to the gap between the two fitted portions 32a of the first shoe member 32, and the two fitting pieces 34d are respectively fitted to the two fitted

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portions 32a. This connects the plate member 34 to the first shoe member 32 in an integrally movable manner in the front-rear direction. In this case, as shown in the enlarged view of FIG. 3, the plate side teeth 41, which extend through the fitted portion 32a, are set to be overlapped with the shoe side teeth 35 and 36 in the vertical direction of the vehicle. Thus, when the shoe side teeth 35 and 36 and the driven teeth 37 of the first shoe member 32 are meshed with the driving teeth 22, the plate side teeth 41 of the plate member 34 is also meshed with the driving teeth 22.

Additionally, the plate member 34 includes two generally L-shaped fitting pieces 34e, which extend upward then toward the vehicle outer side respectively from front and rear edges of the main body 34a sandwiching the outer upright wail 34c. When distal ends of the two fitting pieces 34e are fitted to the main body 33a, basal ends of the two fitting pieces 34e are located in the proximity or contact the restriction piece 33b of the second shoe member 33. This couples the plate member 34 to the second shoe member in an integrally movable manner.

The sliding member 31, which integrates the first and second shoe members 32 and 33 and the plate member 34, is temporarily held on the straight teeth rack belt 21 by the two hook projections 39 and the like as described above. As shown in FIG. 1B, the sliding member 31 is mounted on the guiderail 13 in the longitudinal direction of the guiderail 13. Thus, the straight teeth rack belt 21 and the sliding member 31, which are meshed with each other as described above, are movable in the front-rear direction along the guiderail 13.

More specifically, the straight teeth rack belt 21 including the two positioning protrusions 38 of the first shoe member 32 is mounted on the first rail portion 14 of the guiderail 13 in a movable manner in the front-rear direction, and the second shoe member 33 is mounted on the second rail portion 15 in a movable manner in the front-rear direction. In this case, the inner surface of the straight teeth rack belt 21 contacts or is located in the proximity of the adjacent upright wall 13b, and the outer surface of the straight teeth rack belt 21 contacts or is located in the proximity of the adjacent projections 13e and 13f. This limits displacement of the straight teeth rack belt 21 in the lateral direction of the vehicle within a fixed range. Additionally, a lower surface of the straight teeth rack belt 21 contacts or is located in the proximity of the bottom wall 13a, and an upper surface of the straight teeth rack belt 21 contacts or is located in the proximity of the adjacent upper flange 13c. This limits displacement of the straight teeth rack belt 21 in the vertical direction of the vehicle within a fixed range.

At the same time, in the first shoe member 32, which is meshed with the straight teeth rack belt 21, the adjacent projection 13e is fitted to the rail guide portion 32g, and an outer distal end face of the lower positioning protrusion 38 contacts or is located in the proximity of the projection 13f. This limits displacement of the first shoe member 32 in the lateral direction of the vehicle within a fixed range. Further, in the first shoe member 32, a lower surface of the lower positioning protrusion 38 contacts or is located in the proximity of the bottom wail 13a, a top face of the upper positioning protrusion 38 contacts or is located in the proximity of the adjacent intermediate flange 13d, and the adjacent projection 13e is inserted into the rail guide portion 32g. This limits displacement of the first shoe member 32 in the vertical direction of the vehicle within a fixed range. In this case, the elastic piece 32c of the first shoe member 32 elastically contacts the bottom wall 13a.

In the second shoe member 33, which is coupled to the first shoe member 32 by the plate member 34, the restriction piece 33b contacts or is located in the proximity of an outer basal

end surface of the fitting piece **34e** of the plate member **34** and an inner surface of the adjacent projection **13e**. This limits displacement of the second shoe member **33** in the lateral direction of the vehicle within a fixed range. In this case, the elastic piece **33c** of the second shoe member **33** elastically contacts the adjacent upper flange **13c**, and the elastic piece **33d** elastically contacts the adjacent upright wall **13b**.

In this manner, separation of the straight teeth rack belt **21** from the sliding member **31** in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle is restricted. This keeps the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** meshed with the driving teeth **22** in the first rail portion **14**. Needless to say, in this case, relative movement of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in the front-rear direction is restricted. That is, a driving force (pushing and pulling force) in the front-rear direction from the straight teeth rack belt **21** is transmitted to the sliding member **31** by the meshing of the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** with the driving teeth **22**. The first and the second rail portions **14** and **15** form a mounted portion.

A generally flange-like engagement piece **34f** extends from an upper end portion of the outer upright wall **34c** toward the upright wall **34b**. Also, a tubular support projection **34g** having a closed end projects from an intermediate portion of the upright wall **34c** in the vertical direction of the vehicle toward the vehicle inner side. The engagement piece **34f** and the support projection **34g** are linked to a functional bracket **46**, which is, for example, formed by a metal plate. The functional bracket **46** supports lateral edges of the movable panel **12**. Movement of the plate member **34** (sliding member **31**) in the front-rear direction controls the position of the functional bracket **46** together with the movable panel **12**.

The operation of the present embodiment will now be described.

As described above, the sliding member **31**, which is temporarily held on the straight teeth rack belt **21** by the two hook projections **39** and the like, is mounted on the guiderail **13**. This limits displacement of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle within a fixed range as described above. Thus, separation of the straight teeth rack belt **21** from the sliding member **31** in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle is restricted. This keeps the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** meshed with the driving teeth **22**. In addition, the sliding member **31** slides on the guiderail **13** in contact with the elastic piece **32c** of the first shoe member **32** and the elastic piece **33c** and **33d** of the second shoe member **33**. This reduces the sliding resistance.

Accordingly, the present embodiment has the advantages described below.

(1) In the present embodiment, the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** are supported in the front-rear direction by meshing the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** with the driving teeth **22**. The straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31**, in which the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** are meshed with the driving teeth **22**, are mounted on the first and second rail portions **14** and **15** (mounted portions). This supports the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle. Consequently, the sliding member **31** may be moved in the front-rear direction integrally with the straight teeth rack belt **21**, which is driven by the electric drive source to move in the front-rear direction of the vehicle. In this case, basically, without forming a hole in the straight teeth rack belt **21**, the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding

member **31** may be integrally moved in the front-rear direction by using the driving teeth **22**. This avoids a decrease in the strength of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and thus allows the straight teeth rack belt **21** to be reduced in size.

(2) In the present embodiment, the meshing of the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** with the driving teeth is achieved when the two positioning protrusions **38** are loosely fitted to the corresponding slots **24**. Thus, the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** are meshed with the driving teeth **22** at the desirable positions in the front-rear direction.

(3) In the present embodiment, when each positioning protrusion **36** is loosely fitted to the corresponding slot **24**, the two hook projections **39** are hooked to the two steps **23** sandwiching the slot **24** in the front-rear direction. Thus, for example, before being mounted on the guiderail **13** (mounted portion), if the straight teeth rack belt **21** is temporarily coupled to the sliding member **31** when the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** are meshed with the driving teeth **22**, the two hook projections **39** are each hooked on the step when each positioning protrusion **38** is loosely fitted to the corresponding slot **24**. This easily supports the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in a temporarily coupled manner and improves coupling features when mounted on the guiderail **13** (mounted portion).

(4) In the present invention, the resin shoe side teeth **35** and **36** are overlapped with the metal plate side teeth **41** in the vertical direction of the vehicle and cooperate with the plate side teeth **41** and the resin shoe side teeth **35** and **36** to be meshed with the driving teeth **22**. This ensures the support strength of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in the front-rear direction in a preferred manner.

In addition, by adjusting the number of teeth of the plate side teeth **41**, the support strength of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in the front-rear direction may be easily adjusted.

Further, even when a portion of the fitted portion **32a** is used for the coupling with the plate member **34** (fitting piece **34d**), a decrease in the meshing area with the driving teeth **22** in the vertical direction of the vehicle may be avoided.

(5) In the present embodiment, the sliding member **31** (plate member **34**) may be coupled to the straight teeth rack belt **21** without the straight teeth rack belt **21** extending through the sliding member **31** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. Thus, there is no need to set, for example, a cross-sectional shape (that is, cross-shaped cross-sectional shape) in the upright wall **13b** of the guiderail **13** that avoids interference with the sliding member. This simplifies the structure of the guiderail **13**.

(6) In the present embodiment, the slot **24** may be formed at the same time as when cutting the ends of the straight teeth rack belt **21**. Particularly, the slot **24** may be formed in a cutout process, which can be performed with a processing tool smaller than that used to form a hole.

(7) The present embodiment limits displacement of the sliding member **31** from the guiderail **13** in the lateral direction of the vehicle within a fixed range with the two restriction pieces **32d** and **33b** of the sliding member **31** (the first and the second shoe members **32** and **33**). This keeps the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** meshed with the driving teeth **22** in a further ensured manner.

(8) In the present embodiment, in the straight teeth rack belt **21**, the teeth (driving teeth **22**) meshed with the drive source **17** have the same shape as the driving teeth **22**. This allows for the teeth meshed with the drive source **17** to have the same shape, and there is no need to design a new shape for

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the driving teeth that are meshed with the sliding member **31** in the straight teeth rack belt **21**.

(9) In the present embodiment, in the first shoe member **32** (shoe member), the plate side teeth **41** (fitting piece **34d**) extends through the fitted portion **32a**. This supports the plate side teeth **41** in a further ensured manner.

Second Embodiment

A second embodiment of the sunroof device will now be described with reference to FIGS. **8** to **10**. The second embodiment mainly differs from the first embodiment in the holding structure used when the sliding member is temporarily coupled to the drive cable. Components that are similar will not be described in detail.

As shown in FIG. **8A**, a left side guiderail **111L**, which is used in lieu of the guiderail **13**, includes two upright walls **111a** and **111b** aligned in the lateral direction of the vehicle. An upper end of the outer upright wall **111a** is connected to a first rail portion **112**, which has a generally C-shaped cross-sectional and opens toward the vehicle inner side. A closed side of the first rail portion **112** is located toward the vehicle outer side from the upright wall **111a**. An upper end of the inner upright wall **111b** is connected to a generally plate-like bottom wall **111c** extending toward the vehicle outer side. An upper surface of the bottom wall **111c** includes two projections **111d** and **111e**, which are aligned in the lateral direction of the vehicle and extend upward. An upper end of the inner projection **111e** is connected to a second rail portion **113**, which has a generally C-shaped cross-section and opens toward the vehicle outer side. A closed side of the second rail portion **113** is located toward the vehicle inner side from the projection **111e**. The range of the first rail portion **112** in the vertical direction of the vehicle is set to be the same as the total range of the projection **111e** and the second rail portion **113** in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

The bottom wall **111c** and the two projections **111d** and **111e** form a third rail portion **114**, which has a generally U-shaped cross-section and opens upward. The bottom wall **111c** and an upper wall of the second rail portion **113** form a fourth rail portion **115** having an opening, which opens toward the vehicle outer side and is located toward the vehicle outer side from the projection **111d**. Needless to say, the fourth rail portion **115** is opposed to the first rail portion **112** in the lateral direction of the vehicle.

As shown in FIG. **8B**, a right side guiderail **111R**, which is used in lieu of the guiderail **13**, has the same shape as the guiderail **111L** although the shape is symmetric. The guiderail **111R** also includes the first to fourth rail portions **112** to **115**.

A straight teeth rack belt **121**, which is used in lieu of the straight teeth rack belt **21**, is coupled in a slidable manner in the front-rear direction to the third rail portion **114** of each of the guiderails **111L** and **111R**. The two projections **111d** and **111e** limit displacement of each straight teeth rack belt **121** from the corresponding guiderail **111L** and **111R** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The bottom wall **111c** and the upper wall of the second rail portion **113** limit displacement of each straight teeth rack belt **121** from the corresponding guiderail **111L** or **111R** in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

As shown in FIGS. **9A** and **9B**, the straight teeth rack belts **121**, which are coupled to the corresponding guiderails **111L** and **111R**, include driving teeth **122**, which extend in the same direction. That is, the driving teeth **122** of the left straight teeth rack belt **121** are located at the vehicle inner side, and the driving teeth **122** of the right straight teeth rack belt **121** are located at the vehicle outer side. A slot **123**, which opens in the lateral direction of the vehicle, is formed on a rear

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end portion of each straight teeth rack belt **121** by cutting off an upper edge to form a generally U-shaped groove.

As shown in FIG. **9A**, a resin sliding member **131L**, which is used in lieu of the sliding member **31** (shoe member), is coupled in an integrally movable manner in the front-rear direction to the left straight teeth rack belt **121**. The sliding member **131L** includes a vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L**, which has a generally block-like shape and extends in the front-rear direction, a generally fiat plate-like connection piece **133L**, which extends toward the vehicle outer side from a longitudinally central upper portion of the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L**, and a vehicle outer side shoe portion **134L**, which is connected to a distal end of the connection piece **133L** and extends downward. The two ends of a thin plate-like elastic piece **134a** are connected to an outer surface of the vehicle outer side shoe portion **134L**. The elastic piece **134a** is generally arcuate and bulged toward the vehicle outer side.

Further, the sliding member **131L** includes a positioning protrusion **135L**, which has a generally plate-like shape and extends from a longitudinally central upper portion of the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L** in the longitudinal direction toward the vehicle inner side (in the lateral direction of the vehicle opposing the slot **123**), and two extension portions **136L**, which extend from a distal end of the positioning protrusion **135L** toward both sides in the front-rear direction. The length of the positioning protrusion **135L** in the front-rear direction is set to be slightly shorter than the open width of the slot **123** of the straight teeth rack belt **121** in the front-rear direction.

A plurality of driven teeth **137L**, which form ridges and valleys in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are formed on an outer portion of each extension portion **136L** opposed to the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L**. That is, the driven teeth **137L** are located at opposite sides of the positioning protrusion **135L** in the front-rear direction. The driven teeth **137L**, which are aligned in the front-rear direction at the same intervals as the driving teeth **122**, may be meshed with the driving teeth **122**.

More specifically, as shown in FIG. **10A**, the sliding member **131L** is overlapped with the straight teeth rack belt **121** in the vertical direction of the vehicle, and the positioning protrusion **135L** is loosely fitted to the slot **123**. When the sliding member **131L** is positioned relative to the straight teeth rack belt **121** at a certain location in the front-rear direction, the driven teeth **137L** are meshed with the driving teeth **122**. In this case, the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L** contacts or is located in the proximity of a rear surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** at opposite sides of the positioning protrusion **135L** in the front-rear direction. Two opposing portions **138L** are formed on portions of the sliding member **131L** (vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L**) opposed to the two extension portions **136L** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. When the driven teeth **137L** are meshed with the driving teeth **122**, the rear surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** contacts or is located in the proximity of the two opposing portions **138L**. This restricts movement of the sliding member **131L** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The loose fitting of the positioning protrusion **135L** to the slot **123** restricts downward movement of the sliding member **131L**. In this manner, the straight teeth rack belt **121** temporarily holds the sliding member **131L**.

As shown in FIG. **8A**, the straight teeth rack belt **121**, which temporarily holds the sliding member **131L** with the driven teeth **137L** meshing the driving teeth **122**, is mounted on the third rail portion **114** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction. In this case, in the sliding member **131L**,

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the vehicle outer side shoe portion **134L** is mounted on the first rail portion **112** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction, the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132L** is mounted on the fourth rail portion **115** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction, and the two extension portions **136L** are mounted on the second rail portion **113** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction.

As shown in FIG. 9B, a resin sliding member **131R**, which is used in lieu of the sliding member **31** (shoe member), is also coupled to the straight teeth rack belt **121** in an integrally movable manner in the front-rear direction. In the same manner as the sliding member **131L**, the sliding member **131R** includes a vehicle inner side shoe portion **132R**, a connection piece **133R**, a vehicle outer side shoe portion **134R**, a positioning protrusion **135R**, two extension portions **136R**, and two opposing portions **138R**. However, driven teeth **137R**, which form ridges and valleys in the lateral direction of the vehicle, are formed on inner portions of the two opposing portions **138R**, which are opposed to the two extension portions **136R**. The driven teeth **137R**, which are aligned in the front-rear direction at the same intervals as the driving teeth **122**, may be meshed with the driving teeth **122**.

More specifically, as shown in FIG. 10B, the sliding member **131R** is overlapped with the straight teeth rack belt **121** in the vertical direction of the vehicle, and the positioning protrusion **135R** is loosely fitted to the slot **123**. This positions the sliding member **131R** at a certain location relative to the straight teeth rack belt **121** in the front-rear direction when the driven teeth **137R** are meshed with the driving teeth **122**. In this case, the two extension portions **136R** contact or are located in the proximity of the surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** at opposite sides of the positioning protrusion **135R** in the front-rear direction. When the driven teeth **137R** are meshed with the driving teeth **122**, the rear surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** contacts or is located in the proximity of the two extension portions **136R**. This restricts movement of the sliding member **131R** in the lateral direction of the vehicle. The loose fitting of the positioning protrusion **135R** to the slot **123** restricts downward movement of the sliding member **131R**.

As shown in FIG. 8B, the straight teeth rack belt **121**, which temporarily holds the sliding member **131R** with the driven teeth **137R** meshing the driving teeth **122**, is mounted on the third rail portion **114**. In this case, in the sliding member **131R**, the vehicle outer side shoe portion **134R** is mounted on the first rail portion **112** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction, the vehicle inner side shoe portion **132R** is mounted on the fourth rail portion **115** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction, and the two extension portions **136R** is mounted on the second rail portion **113** in a movable manner in the front-rear direction.

An appropriate support member, which functions as the plate member **34**, (not shown in the drawings) is coupled to each of the sliding members **131L** and **131R** in an integrally movable manner in the front-rear direction. The support member is connected to the functional bracket **46**.

The operation of the present embodiment will now be described.

As described above, when the sliding members **131L** and **131R** are temporarily held on the straight teeth rack belt **121**, the sliding members **131L** and **131R** are mounted on the corresponding guiderails **111L** and **111R**. This restricts displacement of the straight teeth rack belt **121** and the sliding members **131L** and **131R** in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle within a fixed range as described above. Thus, separation of the straight teeth rack belt **121** from the sliding members **131L** and **131R** in the lateral and vertical directions

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of the vehicle is restricted. This keeps the driven teeth **137L** and **137R** meshed with the driving teeth **122**.

As described above in detail, the present embodiment has the following advantages in addition to advantages (1), (2), (5), (6), and (8) of the first embodiment.

(1) In the present embodiment, when the driving teeth **122** are meshed with the driven teeth **137L**, the rear surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** is held by the two opposing portions **138L**. This temporarily holds the straight teeth rack belt **121** on the sliding member **131L**. In the same manner, when the driving teeth **122** are meshed with the driven teeth **137R**, the rear surface of the straight teeth rack belt **121** is held by the two extension portions **136R**. This temporarily holds the straight teeth rack belt **121** on the sliding member **131R**. Thus, coupling features may be improved when mounting the straight teeth rack belt **121** and the sliding members **131L** and **131R**, in which the driving teeth **122** are meshed with the driven teeth **137L** and **137R**, on the guiderails **111L** and **111R** (mounted portions).

The above embodiments may be modified as follows.

In the first embodiment, the portion of the driving teeth **22** that are meshed with the shoe side teeth **35** and **36** of the sliding member **31** may face the vehicle outer side or the vehicle inner side by twisting one of the straight teeth rack belts **21R** and **21L** or the like.

In the first embodiment, the two restriction pieces **32d** and **33b** of the sliding member **31** (first and second shoe members **32** and **33**) may be omitted.

In the first embodiment, the sliding member including the plate member may be formed integrally from only a resin. In other words, there is no need for cooperation with a metal portion (plate side teeth **41**) when meshing the straight teeth rack belt **21** with the sliding member.

In the first embodiment, the mounted portion is formed in cooperation with the first and the second rail portions **14** and **15**. However, the mounted portion may have any structure as long as the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31**, which are meshed with each other, are supported in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle.

In the first embodiment, the two steps **23** are arranged at opposite sides of the straight teeth rack belt **21** in the vertical direction of the vehicle. However, at least one of the steps **23** may be omitted. Accordingly, the two hook projections **39** arranged at the corresponding side of the positioning protrusion **38** may be omitted.

In the first embodiment, instead of the step **23** of the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the hook projection **39** of the sliding member **31**, an appropriate holding portion may be employed to support the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in a temporarily coupled manner. This also easily supports the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** in a temporarily coupled manner and improves the coupling features when mounted on the guiderail **13** (mounted portion).

In the first embodiment, a pair of the slots **24** is arranged at both sides of the straight teeth rack belt **21** in the vertical direction of the vehicle. However, at least one of the slots **24** may be omitted. Accordingly, at least one of the positioning protrusions **38** arranged at both sides of the sliding member **31** (first shoe member **32**) in the vertical direction of the vehicle.

In the first embodiment, instead of the slot **24** and the positioning protrusion **38**, an appropriate positioning portion may be arranged in the straight teeth rack belt **21** and the sliding member **31** to determine the position where the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** are meshed with the driving teeth **22**. In this case, the

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positioning portion also meshes the shoe side teeth **35** and **36**, the plate side teeth **41**, and the driven teeth **37** with the driving teeth **22**. Thus, the shoe side teeth **35** and **36** and the plate side teeth **41** are meshed with the driving teeth **22** at the desirable position positions in the front-rear direction of the vehicle.

In the second embodiment, an elastic piece having a generally arcuate shape, which is bulged downward, may be located on lower surfaces of the vehicle inner side shoe portions **132L** and **132R** or the vehicle outer side shoe portions **134L** and **134R**.

The second embodiment may have a structure that arranges the sliding member **131L** or the sliding member **131R** at both left and right sides. In this case, if necessary, the corresponding straight teeth rack belt **121** may be twisted so that the driving teeth **122** of the straight teeth rack belt **121** are meshed with the driven teeth **137L** of the sliding member **131L** or the driven teeth **137R** of the sliding member **131R**.

In the second embodiment, the second rail portion **113** may be located at the vehicle outer side of the guiderail **111L** and the vehicle outer side of the guiderail **111R**. In this case, preferably, the sliding member **131R** is arranged in the second rail portion **113** of the guiderail **111L**, and the sliding member **131L** is arranged in the second rail portion **113** of the guiderail **111R**.

In the second embodiment, the mounted portion is formed in cooperation with the first to fourth rail portions **112** to **115**. However, the mounted portion may have any structure as long as the straight teeth rack belt **121** and the sliding members **131L** and **131R**, which are meshed with each other, are held in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle.

In each of the embodiments, instead of the straight teeth rack belts **21** and **121**, which serve as the drive cables, for example, a cylindrical cable (geared cable) including helical teeth (so-called threads) may be employed. In this case, a sliding member including driven teeth that can be meshed with driving teeth of the geared cable may be employed.

In each of the embodiments, besides the teeth, which are meshed with the drive source **17**, the straight teeth rack belts **21** and **121** may each include driving teeth, which differ in shape from the teeth meshed with the drive source **17**. For example, the driving teeth and the teeth, which are meshed with the drive source **17**, may be located in areas independent from each other in the longitudinal direction of each of the straight teeth rack belts **21** and **121**.

Each of the embodiments may position the sliding members **31**, **131L**, and **131R** corresponding to the straight teeth rack belts **21** and **121** in the front-rear direction, for example, by matching appropriate marks (figures or the like) arranged on the straight teeth rack belts **21** and **121** and the sliding members **31**, **131L**, and **131R**.

In each of the embodiments, the slots **24** and **123** each may be fitted to the corresponding positioning protrusion **33**, **135L**, and **135R**.

DESCRIPTION OF REFERENCE SYMBOLS

10 Roof (Roof Portion)
10a Roof Opening (Opening Portion)
11 Sunroof Device
12 Movable Panel
13, **111L**, **111R** Guiderail
14, **112** First Rail Portion (Mounted Portion)
15, **113** Second Rail Portion (Mounted Portion)
17 Drive Source
21, **21R**, **21L**, **121** Straight Teeth Rack Belt (Drive Cable)
22, **22R**, **22L**, **122** Driving Teeth (Teeth)
23 Step (Holding Portion)

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24 Slot (Positioning Portion)
31, **31R**, **31L**, **131L**, **131R** Sliding Member
32 First Shoe Member (Shoe Member)
32a Fitted Portion
33 Second Shoe Member (Shoe Member)
34 Plate Member
35, **36** Shoe Side Teeth (Driven Teeth)
37, **137L**, **137R** Driven Teeth
38 Positioning Protrusion (Positioning Portion)
39 Hook Projection (Holding Portion)
41 Plate Side Teeth (Driven Teeth)
46 Functional Bracket
114 Third Rail Portion (Mounted Portion)
115 Fourth Rail Portion (Mounted Portion)
135L, **135R** Positioning Protrusion
136L, **136R** Extension Portion
138L, **138R** Opposing Portion

The invention claimed is:

1. A sunroof device comprising:

a functional bracket configured to support a lateral edge of a movable panel that opens and closes an opening formed in a roof portion of a vehicle;

a guiderail configured to be located at a lateral edge of the opening and extend in the front-rear direction of the vehicle;

a drive member that includes driving teeth arranged along the drive member, wherein the drive member is driven to move along the guiderail in the front-rear direction of the vehicle;

a sliding member that is linked to the functional bracket and arranged to be movable in the front-rear direction of the vehicle along the guiderail, wherein the sliding member controls a position of the functional bracket together with the movable panel when moving in the front-rear direction of the vehicle;

driven teeth formed on the sliding member, wherein the driven teeth are meshed with the driving teeth and restrict relative movement of the drive member and the sliding member in the front-rear direction of the vehicle;

a mounted portion formed on the guiderail, wherein the drive member and the sliding member, in which the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth, are mounted on the mounted portion, and the mounted portion holds the drive member and the sliding member in the lateral and vertical directions of the vehicle;

a slot formed in a heightwise edge of the drive member, wherein the slot opens in the lateral direction of the vehicle;

a positioning protrusion that protrudes from the sliding member in the lateral direction of the vehicle opposed to the slot, wherein the positioning protrusion is loosely fitted to the slot when the driving teeth are meshed with the driven teeth;

a step formed on the heightwise edge of the drive member where the step is formed along substantially the entire length in the longitudinal direction, wherein the step decreases the height of the drive member at a side separated from the sliding member; and

two hook projections that project toward the front and rear directions from a lateral, distal end of the positioning protrusion, wherein the hook projections are hooked to the step at both sides of the slot to sandwich the slot in the front-rear direction of the vehicle.

2. The sunroof device according to claim **1**, wherein the drive member includes teeth arranged at fixed intervals, and the sunroof device comprises a drive source meshed with the

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teeth, wherein the drive source drives the drive member, and the teeth and the driving teeth have the same shape.

3. The sunroof device according to claim 1, wherein the slot and the positioning protrusion and the step comprise a holding portion that holds the drive member and the sliding member in a temporarily coupled manner. 5

4. The sunroof device according to claim 1, wherein the sliding member includes

a resin shoe member that includes shoe side teeth, wherein the shoe member is capable of sliding in the front-rear direction of the vehicle along the guiderail, and 10

a metal plate member that includes plate side teeth, wherein the plate member is attached to the shoe member and linked to the functional bracket, and

the driven teeth are formed by cooperation of the shoe side teeth and the plate side teeth, which are overlapped in the vertical direction of the vehicle. 15

5. The sunroof device according to claim 4, wherein the shoe side teeth include a tubular fitted portion through which the plate side teeth extend. 20

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